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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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3 December 1967

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

Heavy rail and truck traffic was reported on the major transportation routes near Hanoi on 1 December. In the south, no major engagements occurred over the weekend, but small-scale Communist attacks took place in several areas.

I. Military Situation in South Vietnam: Sporadic, small-scale Communist attacks occurred in widely scattered areas of South Vietnam over the weekend (Paras. 1-6). Cambodian MIGs have strayed over the border into South Vietnam (Para. 7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

The Lower House of the National Assembly debates government's mobilization decree (Paras. 4-6). President Thieu continues to take a tough public line on Communist use of Cambodian territory (Paras. 7-8).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

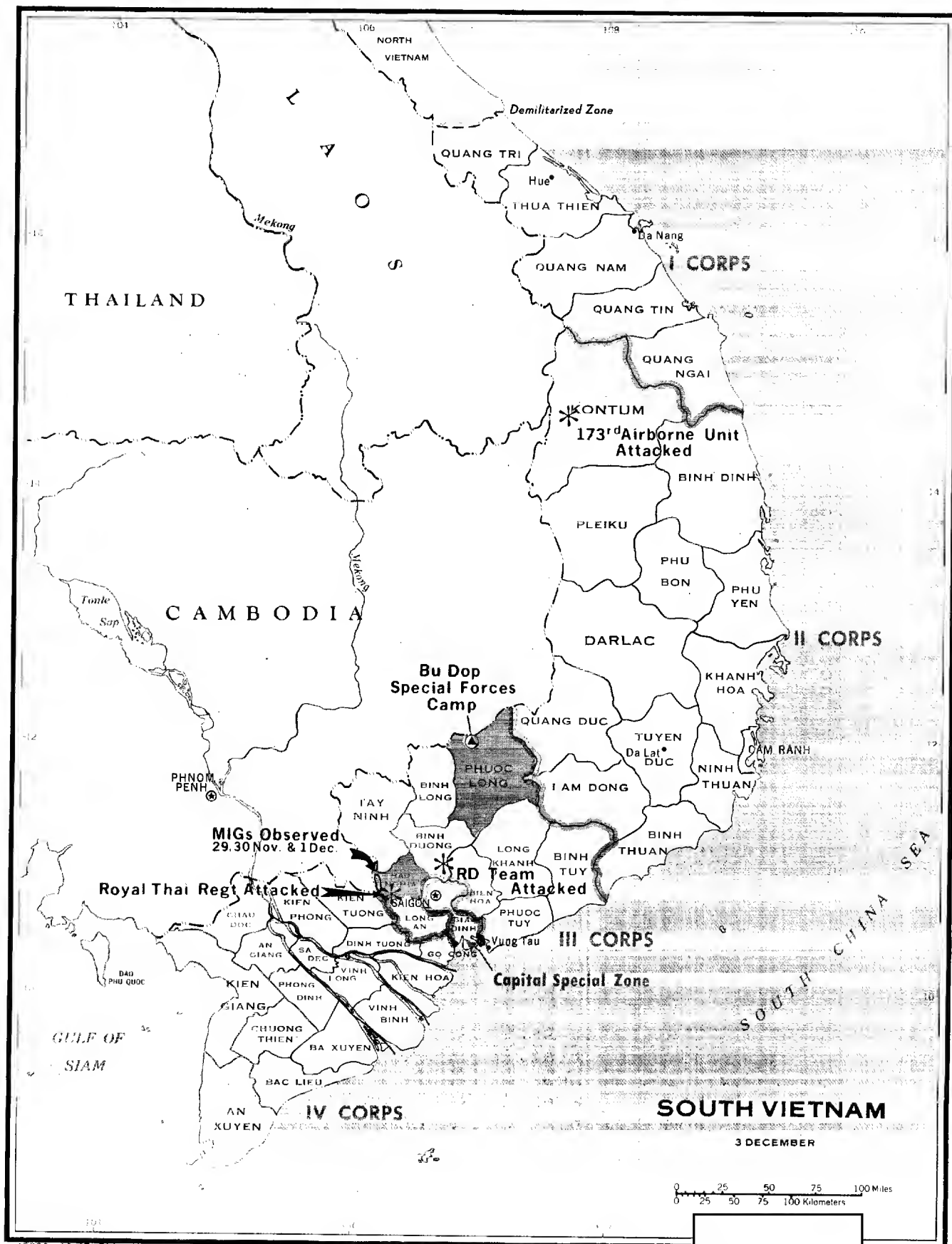
V. Communist Political Developments: The Chinese Communist Foreign Ministry has protested an alleged US air attack on a Chinese ship in a North Vietnamese port (Paras. 1-3).

VI. Other Major Aspects:

heavy traffic on the principal rail and highway routes near Hanoi on 1 December (Paras. 1-4).

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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Sporadic, small-scale Communist attacks occurred in widely scattered areas of South Vietnam over the weekend.

2. Communist mortar and artillery fire was directed against an element of the US Army 173rd Airborne Brigade located about ten miles west of Dak To on 1 December. One US soldier was killed and ten others were wounded in the attack. The enemy barrage destroyed two 155-mm. howitzers, two trucks, and a quantity of artillery ammunition.

3. A company-size enemy force attacked a South Vietnamese Revolutionary Development team 15 miles north of Saigon on 1 December, killing eight team members and wounding five others. Artillery fire was directed against the attackers, but enemy losses are unknown.

4. On 2 December the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Regiment was attacked while on a road security patrol 30 miles east of Saigon. In the ensuing firefight two Thai soldiers were killed and an American adviser was wounded. No enemy casualties were reported.

5. Enemy mortar and small-arms fire directed against a US Army cavalry troop killed two US soldiers and wounded 17 others. The engagement occurred about 15 miles northwest of Chu Lai. Artillery fire was placed on the enemy position, but Communist casualties are unknown.

6. Enemy forces resumed their attacks on the Bu Dop Special Forces camp on 2 December with two periods of 82-mm. mortar and suspected rocket fire. In the two attacks, 17 allied troops were wounded, communications and electrical equipment were destroyed and two howitzers were damaged. Air and artillery strikes were directed against the source of the enemy barrage, but Communist losses were not reported.

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MIGs Sighted Near Cambodian Border

7. Observations of MIG fighter aircraft in Hau Nghia Province on 29 and 30 November and 1 December suggest that Cambodia may be stepping up its normal air patrols in the border area. Reports from US forward air controllers indicate that on each occasion one jet interceptor came from Cambodian territory and made brief, shallow penetrations of Vietnamese airspace. The MIGs took no hostile action against the airborne observers or against personnel or installations in South Vietnam. Cambodia has seven MIG-15/17s in its air force, and its aircraft have strayed into Vietnamese airspace on previous occasions during periodic patrols of the border.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Mobilization Decree

4. The Lower House of the National Assembly on 1 December debated the government's recent partial mobilization decree. The government was criticized for proclaiming the mobilization decree without first clearing it through the assembly. The decree itself came under attack by opposition deputies as "unconstitutional" and unnecessary. In addition a handful of deputies took a stronger line, castigating the decree as a clear example of US intervention. A representative from Hue suggested that Vietnamese youth should not have to die in a war being fought for US interests. His remarks were repudiated by other deputies, however.

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5. The mobilization decree was also strongly defended by progovernment deputies who maintained that it was necessary to meet the challenge of Communist forces and to demonstrate that South Vietnam is contributing to its own defense. The Lower House, however, finally passed by a substantial majority a resolution calling on the government to explain and defend the mobilization decree before the National Assembly. A similar resolution had been passed earlier by the Upper House.

6. The government, meanwhile, has moved to help clarify how the mobilization order will work. The Ministry of Defense released a note in Saigon on 1 December stating that the partial mobilization will be implemented in stages according to age groups. The note also indicated that student deferments would continue, although stricter criteria will be enforced.

Thieu on Cambodia

7. President Thieu continues to take a tough public line on Communist use of Cambodian territory. Thieu told the press in Dalat this weekend that South Vietnam reserves the right to pursue and attack into Cambodia when Communist units move across the border. Thieu emphasized, however, that this would only apply during the course of a continuing battle, and that he is not advocating allied operations into Cambodia.

8. Thieu's remarks will further fuel apprehensions in Phnom Penh that the recent spate of press reports on Cambodia's involvement in the war are designed to provide justification for allied ground and air strikes across the border. South Vietnamese troops have actually engaged in "hot pursuit" on a number of instances in the past, although the nature of the fighting in the border area does not often provide occasions when "hot pursuit" becomes a relevant factor.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. On 2 December the Chinese Communist Foreign Ministry issued a statement protesting a 25 November US air attack on a Chinese freighter anchored at the North Vietnamese port of Hon Gai. Peking claimed that the attack wounded eight Chinese crew members and seriously damaged the ship. Although a US aircraft did drop at least one bomb in the vicinity of the ship on 25 November, photographic reconnaissance the next day showed no apparent damage.

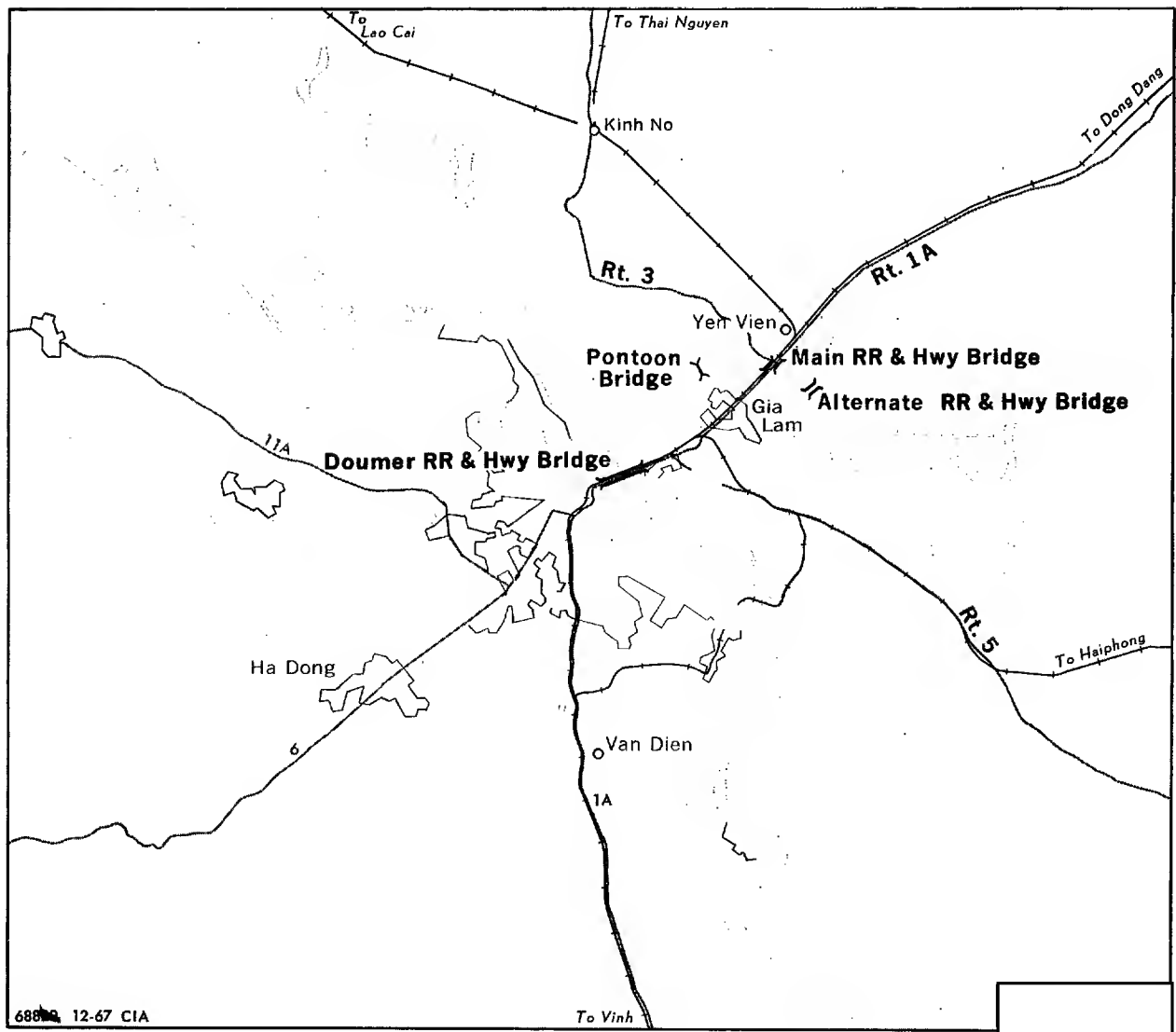
2. The Chinese protest went no further than Peking's standard anti-US rhetoric and its pledges of support for the "Vietnamese people." The attack was labeled as an additional sign that the US, faced with "dire straits" in Vietnam, intends to further escalate and widen the war--a major theme of recent Chinese propaganda on Vietnam.

3. Hanoi broadcast a pro forma statement on 2 December backing up the Chinese protest. North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Trinh met with a Chinese diplomat to "convey his warmest greetings to the wounded" and to condemn the alleged attack. Trinh was quoted as saying that "repeated" US attacks on "Chinese and other foreign merchant ships" was a "serious war escalation" and a "brazen violation" of the rights of free trade and navigation.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Heavy traffic was moving on the principal rail and highway routes in the Hanoi area as of 1 December [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Most of the trains and trucks observed appeared to be heading toward Hanoi from the direction of China and from Haiphong.

2. The Doumer rail and highway bridge over the Red River was closed by US bombing on 25 October, but [REDACTED] it had been made serviceable at least for truck traffic. The rail and highway bridge over the Canal des Rapides was damaged by a US raid on 26 October, but was open again as of 5 November [REDACTED]

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3. [REDACTED] both of these spans were operating at full capacity on the night of 1 December and [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] train and truck movement on both bridges had been heavy and continual during the preceding week. At the Canal des Rapides crossing [REDACTED] an alternate rail and highway bridge was still inoperative [REDACTED] a pontoon bridge to the west of the main span was carrying additional truck traffic.

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[REDACTED] Hanoi is taking advantage of the poor flying weather over North Vietnam to replenish supplies consumed during the past six weeks of heavy bombing in the capital area.

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